



- ?? Make children wear a life jacket when on a dock, riding in a boat or raft, when skiing or tubing, and even when playing near the water. The law says children under age twelve must wear a life jacket while riding in a vessel of 26 feet or less while under way.
- ?? Children should be constantly supervised when in or near water, even if they are wearing a life jacket.
- ?? Swimming lessons and infant/toddler water adjustment classes promote water safety, but they do not replace adult supervision.
- ?? Teach your children to wait for permission before getting into the water. Teach them also not to run or push on pool decks, docks or boats.
- ?? Show your children safe areas for swimming.
- ?? Use and enforce water safety rules; children learn from the actions of adults.
- ?? Never use inflatable water toys, like beach balls or water wings, as life jackets or life preservers.
- ?? Learn infant/child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). When visiting a new water area, know where the nearest phone is to call 9-1-1 for help.

Selecting Life Jackets For Children

A personal flotation device (PFD), or life jacket, can keep your child afloat and keep them warmer in cold water. Drowning can occur in less than a minute, without noise, and often happens even when an adult is nearby.

What do you look for when choosing a life jacket?

- ?? The U.S. Coast Guard approval number on the life jacket -- this means the jacket meets specific criteria for performance and design.
- ?? Check the size and weight on the label. Try the life jacket on your child. Check for proper fit by lifting the life jacket at the shoulders. If there is more than three inches between the child's shoulders and the life jacket, it is too big!
- ?? A head support collar is important for small children. It supports the head when in the water, and a loop on the collar allows for grabbing and lifting a child from the water.
- ?? Small children must have a crotch strap that promotes a snug fit. The strap should be used at all times.
- ?? For older children, it is important to consider comfort and appearance. Let the child participate in the selection of their life jacket. Put their name on it.
- ?? After selection is made, have the child test the life jacket in a pool. This gives you the chance to observe the fit and performance of the life jacket in water, and it gives your child a chance to become comfortable with their life jacket. Teach your child how to swim on their back while wearing the life jacket.

For more information on boating and aquatic safety, contact the Department of Boating and Waterways at 2000 Evergreen Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95815-3888 or call (888) 326-2822.